

that the Emperor and the Court had quitted Rome, their *raison d'etre* was gone. The vast expenditure on their pay and their barracks was money thrown away. Galerius, therefore, abolished the Praetorian camps. Such an act would give clear warning that the absence of the Emperors was not merely temporary, but permanent, that the shifting of the capital had been due not merely to personal predilections, but to abiding political reasons.

That the Praetorians themselves received the order with sullen anger may well be understood. For three centuries they had been the *corps d'elite* of the Roman army, enjoying special pay and special advantages. They had made and unmade Emperors. They had repeatedly held the fortunes of the Empire in their hands. The traditions of their regiments fostered pride and arrogance, for they had seen little active service in their long history, and the severest conflicts they had had to face were tumults in the imperial city. Now their privileges were destroyed by a stroke of the pen, and needing but little instigation to rebellion, they offered the purple to Maxentius, who gladly accepted it. Nor, it is said, were the people unfavourable to his cause, for Maxentius's agents had already been busy among them, and so, after Abellius, the praefect of the city, had been murdered, Maxentius made himself master of Rome without a struggle. His position, however, was very precarious. He had practically no army and he knew that neither Galerius nor Severus would recognise his pretensions. The latter had already taken over the command of the armies of Maximian,